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ABSTRACT

Types of elementary social studies curricula can be categorized according to the amount of subject integration included in each approach. Individual subjects such as history, geography, or economics may be presented as separate and distinct, or these descriptives may be integrated fully within the presentation of social studies materials. Faculty and school administration must consider the amount of integration they consider to be most beneficial when developing a social studies curriculum. In order to increase subject integration, the four types of curriculum approaches presented include: (1) the separate subjects curriculum; (2) the correlated curriculum; (3) the fused curriculum; and (4) the integrated curriculum. The article presents the development of these curricula, the amount of subject integration included in each, and the advantages and disadvantages of each system. (CK)

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ORGANIZING THE ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

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ORGANIZING THE ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

How should the social studies curriculum be organized for instruction? There are numerous ways of organization. Each approach will be discussed within the framework of being useful to the reader. I believe teachers and principals need to give careful consideration in terms of how the curriculum should be organized. There are definite beliefs and assumptions pertaining to each approach emphasized as a way of curricular organization.

The Separate Subjects Curriculum

Perhaps, the oldest approach in organizing the curriculum is to stress the separate subjects approach. Here, the elementary school teacher emphasizes each subject matter area as being distinctly an entity to the self. The following subject matter areas could definitely be taught as a separate social science discipline:

1. history
2. geography
3. government or political science
4. economics
5. anthropology and sociology
6. philosophy
7. psychology

It is quite obvious that one could divide each curriculum area even further such as number 1 above "history" with its many areas and divisions including

1. ancient history
2. medieval history
3. European history
4. American history, among others.

I believe that a case has been made here for the many subject matter areas that could be taught as separate from the others listed.

Thus the elementary school teacher could for subject matter area number one above select units of study in history with its own scope and sequence. Objectives for each unit in history could then be decided upon. Learning activities chosen must or should harmonize with the objectives. The learning activities become valid when they match with the stated objectives. Evaluation procedures in the unit on history should determine how much pupils have learned. Evaluation procedures need to harmonize with the stated objectives. Thus what has been taught matches with the objectives in the historical unit of study. What has been learned by the pupil will be decided upon by evaluation as to the learner's progress toward the stated objectives.

What are the advantages of the separate subjects curriculum in the elementary school?

1. pupils may study one subject matter area only at a given time. Each subject matte area has its own scope and sequence. Thus a subject matter area will not be watered down by relating it with other curriculum areas in teaching- learning situations.

2. each curriculum area as a separate subject has its own scope and sequence. Relating diverse curriculum areas interferes with a subject matter area's own breadth of content and order of presentation.

3. A subject matter area needs to be implemented and pinpointed as to its importance rather than relating it to other curriculum areas.

4. pupils learn what comprises a single academic discipline in a separate subjects curriculum. When relating different curriculum areas, learners may fail to perceive that which makes for a specific academic discipline.

5. pupils tend to study a separate academic discipline more in depth when stressing the separate subjects curricula as compared to other means of organizing the elementary school curriculum.

The Correlated Curriculum

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were educators who believe that a separate subjects curriculum fragmented the elementary school curriculum excessively. To be sure, there are still

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subject matter areas that are taught as separate subjects due to tradition or that it is good to do so. Thus for example, it might be wise to teach certain units of study stressing history only, due to the many events that surrounded an historical incident such as The Revolutionary War, 1776-1781. There is indeed much content in history that surrounds the Revolutionary War. However, there would be educators and historians who would say that much geography needs to be brought in to this unit and other historical units of study. Thus historical events took place within a geographical region and not in a vacuum.

In looking again at the separate subject areas listed above, it is quite obvious that there are too many curriculum areas to teach. Also, content areas may be good to relate to each other. Educational psychologists have long stated that knowledge being related will be remembered longer than that learned in isolation. Teachers can then, in addition to history and geography, correlate government and economics. In the governmental or political science realm, there are numerous laws and rules that relate directly to the world of economics. In economics when buying goods and services, there are laws that regulate and control. Thus, economics and political science may connect well in ongoing units of study in the social studies. In the list above of enumerated separate subject areas, anthropology and sociology are listed together. These two can certainly be interrelated since both academic areas teach and emphasize the concept of culture. Thus when studying the nation of Japan, for instance, learners may study the music, art, architecture, literature, foods, and games of that country.

The Fused Curriculum

To emphasize more of relating diverse curriculum areas, the teacher and principal may emphasize a fused curriculum. In the previously mentioned unit of study emphasizing history and geography, the teacher may also stress political science or a study of government in the social studies. In each historical period of time within a geographical region, different forms of government were in evidence. Thus at the time of the Revolutionary War, The First and Second Continental Congress

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were the ruling bodies of the thirteen original colonies in what is now the United States. The teacher may also fuse anthropology/ sociology with history, geography, and political science. In historical time, people being studied in the social studies, have always invented beliefs, folkways, and mores in culture within a geographical region. With fusion in organizing the curriculum, the teacher has fewer subject matter areas to teach. The elementary school day may then be divided into the flowing curriculum areas:

1. The social studies
2. the language arts
3. science and health
4. mathematics
5. physical education, art, and music.

Fusion in the curriculum stresses teachers doing more of relating different academic disciplines as compared to the separate subjects and correlated approaches. Many educators believed that the latter two approaches in organizing the curriculum did not go far enough in tying different subject matter areas together so that pupils might relate diverse curricula areas increasingly so.

The Integrated Curriculum

There are educators, past and present, who advocated that subject matter areas lose their boundaries and borders completely. John Dewey (1859- 1952), late professor of education from Columbia University in New York City, emphasized the philosophy of experimentalism in curriculum development. With experimentalism, problem solving becomes the major method of instruction. Steps involved in problem solving are indeed flexible. There are numerous models inherent in problem solving. One model stresses the following openended sequence:

1. Pupils with teacher guidance identifying a problem within a contextual situation.
2. The problem is clarified and adequately delimited so that

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solutions can be sought.

3. An hypothesis is developed in answer to the identified problem.

4. A variety of reference sources are used here including concrete, semiconcrete, and abstract materials in attempting to solve the problem.

5. The acquired hypothesis is tested in a life-like situation.

6. The hypothesis is revised if necessary.

The above named model for problem solving can be used in any curriculum area as well as in life's' endeavors. Problem solving integrates subject matter so that it loses its boundaries and borders. It does not matter, here, which academic discipline is used; whatever knowledge is needed to solve the problem is included in experimentalism, as a philosophy of education.

John Dewey had a laboratory school in which his theories of teaching and learning were tried out and modified where necessary. Children in his school identified and solved real, not textbook, problem areas. He believed that one impulse of children was that they liked to learn together and not remain as isolated entities. Thus cooperative problem solving endeavors were emphasized. A second impulse of children, as identified by Dewey, was experimentation or finding out on their own as compared to being told what and how to proceed in learning activities. Inductive learning was then in the offing. Pupils were also perceived to like constructing and making activities rather than a strict abstract curriculum removed from real live situations.

The integrated curriculum then emphasizes that subject matter be taught as being related. In the thinking of the late John Dewey, Subject matter becomes related and loses its boundaries and borders when problem solving is used in teaching- learning situations. Thus whatever subject matter is used by pupils relates directly to vital problems being solved regardless of the academic disciplines involved.

Advocates of the middle school too believe strongly in the integrated curriculum. I have not read of one middle school advocate that does not believe in an integrated curriculum. The middle school contains grades six through eight generally. Middle school experts

believe that this age level means that a separate school environment should be in the offing for pupils in grades six through eight which is different from the junior high school. The junior high school tended to be too much like the senior high school level with its emphasis upon competitive athletics, cheer leaders, and marching bands.
Then too, according to advocates, the middle school should stress a curriculum that harmonizes more with growth and development characteristics of these early adolescents as compared to what is emphasized in a typical junior high school. A major tenet of the middle school as compared to the junior high school when making comparisons is that the former stresses subject matter be taught as being related rather than the latter's stress upon dividing the school day into periods, such as period one from 8:30 to 9:20, history is taught; period two English is taught from 9:30 to 10:20; and period three science is taught from 10:30 to 11:20, and so on.

The integrated curriculum, if emphasized, must be planned for in terms of objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures. A promising approach here is to use an integrated team in team teaching. On the integrated team would be teachers with the following professional degrees in teaching: a science teacher, a social studies teacher, a mathematics teacher, and a language arts teacher. These team members would take turns in teaching in large group sessions, depending upon the needed strengths of involved team members. In committee sessions, following large group instruction, each team member assists pupils in committees to clarify and enrich that which was presented. Individual study by each pupil is also an inherent part of team teaching. Each team member would then assist pupils individually to plan, develop, and assess a project directly relate to the unit being studied. The needs, interests, and purposes are musts to consider when learners pursue individual projects and activities.

Teachers involved in unit planning might well develop integrated courses of study. Thus if pupils are studying a unit on Japan, the following academic disciplines may be brought in to stress integration of content:

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1. history of Japan
2. geography of Japan
3. government (political science) of Japan.
4. culture (anthropology and sociology) of Japanese life involving music, art, architecture, foods, games and recreational experiences, and clothing
5. economics involving a study of the Gross National Product (GNP).
6. literature of Japan
7. metric system use (arithmetic) in Japan
8. geology. Islands and mountains provide unique geological features of Japan.
9. agriculture. Japan grows and produces much of its own food and fiber.
10. Native plants and animals (science) of Japan.

The above named academic disciplines might well be interdisciplinary in teaching- learning situations, making for an integrated curriculum. Objectives in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes may b e developed. Learning opportunities to attain these objectives should stress the concrete (real objects, items, replicas, and models); semi-concrete materials (video tapes, video disks, films, computer programs such as simulations, slides, film strips, pictures, study prints, drawings, diagrams, and printouts); as well as the abstract (reading of textbook and library materials, audio content including tapes, learner developed materials such as experience charts, and resource personnel.)

In Summary

Teachers and administrators need to understand different schools of thought in organizing the social studies curriculum. Thus a separate subjects curriculum might be stressed such as history only, being emphasized inn teaching and learning situations. Or a teacher may wish to place more correlation in ongoing units of study. With correlation, two

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academic disciplines provide content in an ongoing lesson. The teacher then teaches history as occurring within a geographical region. Neither history nor geography receive major emphasis; rather both share the spotlight in a related body of knowledge. Those educators believing in fusing content in curriculum development would go one step further with moving away from correlation to a fused curriculum. Here, an increased number of academic disciplines provide content for an ongoing lesson or unit of study. For example, all social science disciplines may be brought in to teaching- learning situations depending upon the need to do so. Relationship of these content areas should be a must in guiding learners to attain objectives. Those educators who believe that pupils should perceive even more holism in the curriculum would stress the integrated curriculum. Here, subject matter necessary to solve a relevant problem is used regardless of the academic discipline it came from. The teacher then must believe that the ideal is to have all subject matter be related.

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